



**Governor's  
Commission on  
Middle Eastern  
American Affairs**



**2011 Annual Report**



## MISSION STATEMENT

The Governor's Commission on Middle Eastern American Affairs serves as an advisory board to the Governor and agencies within the Executive Department on matters relating to the Middle Eastern American population of Maryland, including matters relating to economic, workforce and business development.

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***A MESSAGE FROM GOVERNOR MARTIN O'MALLEY***

Dear Friends:

On October 11, 2007 I signed an executive order to establish the Governor's Commission on Middle Eastern American Affairs to effectively address the concerns of the Middle Eastern American community. I am proud to join the staff and members of the Commission in presenting their -2011 report.

Diversity is one of Maryland's greatest strengths. For this reason, I believe it is important to recognize the Middle Eastern American community which plays a vital role in moving the State forward. By identifying and addressing issues in the Middle Eastern American community, I am confident that this Commission will help strengthen and grow our One Maryland.

As we make steady progress in our One Maryland, I will rely on the Governor's Commission on Middle Eastern American Affairs to help expand opportunities for the growing Middle Eastern American community in business, employment, education and many other areas.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, which appears to read "Martin O'Malley". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a prominent loop at the end.

Governor

MESSAGE FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF THE GOVERNOR'S OFFICE OF  
COMMUNITY INITIATIVES

The Governor's Office of Community Initiatives (GOCI) coordinates community and volunteer activities statewide and advises the Governor on policies to enhance and improve community programs. This Office also oversees the work of the Governor's Office on Service and Volunteerism, Volunteer Maryland and community affairs services within the Executive Branch of Maryland government. Additionally, GOCI coordinates outreach to ethnic communities across Maryland, overseeing the Governor's Office and Commission on Asian American and Pacific Islander Affairs, the Governor's Commission on African Affairs, the Governor's Commission on Hispanic Affairs, the Maryland Commission on Indian Affairs, and the Governor's Commission on Middle Eastern American Affairs.

As a Governor's Coordinating Office, GOCI is able to engage the resources of multiple State agencies and coordinate policy and activities related to community initiatives. By creating the Governor's Commission on Middle Eastern American Affairs, Governor O'Malley has affirmed his strong commitment to the Middle Eastern American community.

Under the leadership of Chair Anwer Hasan, Vice Chair Rafi Rone and Assistant Director Iman Awad, The Governor's Commission on Middle Eastern American Affairs has already become an integral part of the Governor's Office of Community Initiatives. Together, we expect to make great strides toward ensuring greater access and opportunities for Middle Eastern Americans living in Maryland. In order to achieve this goal, we will continue to reach out to the community, engage key stakeholders, and mobilize participation in support of community initiatives.

Israel C. "Izzy" Patoka, Executive Director  
Governor's Office of Community Initiatives

## MESSAGE FROM THE COMMISSION CHAIR

Dear Friends,

On behalf of the Governor's Commission on Middle Eastern American Affairs, it is my sincere pleasure to present the 2010-2011 Annual Report.

Since 2007, the Commission has been striving to engage the Middle Eastern American community in Maryland. Focusing on building partnerships with state agencies, strengthening relationships with foreign Embassies, and empowering community leaders and organizations the Commission has accomplished numerous initiatives in this fiscal year. These achievements represent the areas of focus charged within the Commission Executive Order; community development, workforce development and business development.

Most notably, it is with distinct honor to include in this year's report, Governor O'Malley's historic trip to Doha, Qatar. This trip was the first of its kind and proved beneficial in creating a sustainable friendship with leadership of the highest level in Qatar. As we witness a substantial amount of growth in the gulf country, the Commission is eager to pursue various opportunities to position Maryland on a global scale in the region.

In addition to the successful delegation, the Commission has continued to advocate for the members of our community through the inclusion of Middle Eastern Americans in the Maryland Minority Business Enterprise program. To further support the community, the Commission engaged with the Maryland Department of Economic Development in order to provide some insight to help position Maryland on a competitive global scale.

This past year presented many accomplishments and the Commission is grateful to have the opportunity to serve the O'Malley/Brown Administration and the community. The Commission hopes to reflect the full 2011 agenda in the following report and to provide a clear outlook for our 2012 initiatives. Thank you!

Sincerely,

Anwer Hasan  
Chair



## COMMISSIONERS

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### **Anwer Hasan, P.E., Chair**

- Vice President, Business Unit Director, EA Engineering
- Chairman, Requirement Committee for Base Realignment and Closure Task Forces for Howard County and Baltimore City
- Member, Higher Education Commission
- Member, Howard County Muslim Council

### **Rafi Rone, Vice Chair**

- Director of Jewish and Israel Initiatives, Joseph & Harvey Meyerhoff Family Charitable Funds
- Board Member, Jewish Communal Service Association
- Fellow, Ralph I. Goldman International

### **Barry Bogage**

- Executive Director, Maryland/Israel Development Center
- Board Member, Montgomery County Sister Cities, Inc.
- Advisory Board Member, TowsonGlobal, Towson University's International Incubator

### **Durriya Badani**

- Recruitment Specialist, International Resource Group

### **Sarit Brosh**

- Financial Advisor, Financial Planning Specialist, Morgan Stanley Smith Barney
- Member, Maryland/Israel Development Center
- Life Member, Hadassah
- Board Member, Ten Li Yad

### **Salwa Elgebaly, Ph.D.**

- President and CEO, Nour Heart, Inc.
- Adjunct Assistant Professor, United States Naval Academy
- Member, Center for Middle East and Islamic Studies, United States Naval Academy
- Commissioner, Anne Arundel Commission for Women
- Director, Anne Arundel Muslim Council

### **Enas Elhanafi**

- Adjunct Faculty, Montgomery College, Rockville
- Student Outreach Coordinator, Montgomery College, Rockville
- Member, The Greater Washington Association of Teachers of Foreign Languages

### **Dorreya (Didi) Elmenshawy**

- Former Director, Construction and Buildings Inspection, Baltimore City Department of Housing and Community Development

### **Bagher Fardanesh, Ph.D.**

- Member, American Society for Training and Development, Maryland Chapter
- Management Consultant, Small Business Development Center
- CEO & Founder, Piaget Consulting

### **Miriam Galston, Ph.D., J.D.**

- Associate Professor, George Washington University Law School
- Member, Advisory Board, Bright Horizons Child Care Center
- Co-Chair, Committee on Political and Lobbying Organizations and Activities
- Member, American Bar Association
- Member, DC Bar Association

**Farzaneh Riar**

- Member, Governor O'Malley Transition Team for Department of Health & Mental Hygeine
- Member, American Public Health Association
- Member, Association of Schools of Public Health

**Mubariz Rizvi**

- Chief Executive Officer, FiberElectronics, LLC
- Founding Member, Maryland Middle East American Chamber of Commerce
- Member, Human Rights Department Howard County, Hate Crime Intervention Panel

**Amin Salam**

- Executive Director, Global Business Development, National US Arab Chamber of Commerce

**Huseyin Saribasak**

- Executive Secretary, Rumi Forum, Rockville Branch
- Member, Maryland Turkish American Inhabitants

**Sam Shihadeh**

- Electrical Engineer, JDSU
- President, American Federation of Ramallah Palestine
- Advisory Board Member, Network for Arab American Professionals

**Chadi Soliman**

- Assistant General Manager, Best Western Plus Hotel & Conference Center
- Certified Tourism Ambassador, Baltimore Tourism Ambassador Program
- Member, Maryland Middle East American Chamber of Commerce

**Julian Spirer**

- Founder, Spirer Law Firm, P.C.
- Member, Higher Education Transition Group
- Former President, AmHatorah Congregation
- Former President, Barney Neighborhood House

**Joseph Taylor**

- Director of Program Development, Center for Academic Partnerships, Academy for Educational Development

**Siron Zidan**

- President, Heart of Islam Foundation, Inc.



**Staff:**

Iman Awad  
Assistant Director



## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



The Governor's Commission on Middle Eastern American Affairs (GCMEAA) was created under the leadership of the O'Malley/Brown Administration in 2008 through Executive Order 01.01.2007.22. Being the first state-level Commission of its kind, the Commission aims to set a standard for other states. Focusing on business, workforce, and community development the GCMEAA every year establishes a work plan to fulfill the development in the three arenas as charged by the Executive Order.

Taking a more aggressive stance on positioning Maryland on a global scale, the Commission's business committee was afforded the opportunity to help Maryland organize various visits from delegations from Iraq and Bahrain throughout the year. In regards to workforce development, the GCMEAA in partnership with the Governor's Ethnic Commissions, hosted a training program at the Maryland Department of Transportation (MDOT) highlighting the Middle Eastern American community in the state along with addressing sensitivities and concerns for employers.

In 2011, the Middle Eastern region began experience tremendous change. As we witnessed the Arab Spring and experienced uncertainty and hope in the region the Commission played a vital role in regards to informing the community about these substantial changes. Participating in White House briefings, inviting guest speakers to Commission meetings and supporting events through other Middle Eastern organizations, the GCMEAA took every opportunity to learn about and disseminate information about the revolutions in the MENA region.

One of the biggest accomplishments for the Commission on Middle Eastern American Affairs was in regards to the pursuit of including Middle Eastern Americans to the Maryland Minority Business Enterprise (MBE) program. MDOT and the Office of MBE invited Middle Eastern American business owners, professionals and leaders to participate in an MBE focus group. The goal of the focus group was to capture firm-level experiences with the programs and any barriers to participation in State contracts and subcontracts across a wide spectrum of goods and services. This discussion is a necessary first step to studying the possibility of Middle Eastern American inclusion into the MBE pool.

As the Commission continues to strive to represent the diversity of the community in Maryland the following report details the 2011 accomplishments and highlights 2012 initiatives. To stay up to date on the Commission initiatives and events within the community, visit the Commission's website at: [www.middleeastern.maryland.gov](http://www.middleeastern.maryland.gov).

